

# Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program Frequently Asked Questions 2019-2020

## Overview

VMSDEP is a Commonwealth of Virginia program that provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled as a result of military service. Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, or the Virginia National Guard.

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is responsible for managing the program and collaborates with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and Virginia's public colleges and universities to assist survivors and dependents of qualified Veterans in attaining their educational goals.

### 1. Who are eligible to receive benefits under the VMSDEP?

**Tier 1 Eligibility** - the student must be admitted to a Virginia public college or university and the spouse or the child, between the ages of 16 and 29, of a Veteran who became totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled as a result of military service and meets the domiciliary requirement as defined in the [Code of Virginia § 23.1-608](#).

**Tier 2 Eligibility** - the student must be admitted to a Virginia public college or university and the spouse or the child, between the ages of 16 and 29, of a Veteran or military service member who was killed; became missing in action; taken prisoner of war; or has been rated totally and permanently disabled or at least 90% permanently disabled due to direct involvement in covered military combat (includes military operation against terrorism; a peacekeeping mission; a terrorist act; or any armed conflict) and meets the domiciliary requirement as defined in the [Code of Virginia § 23.1-608](#).

### 2. What benefits are available under the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)?

Waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for **Tier 1** and **Tier 2** eligible students.

**Tier 2** students are eligible for a stipend to offset the costs of room, board, books, and supplies (amount of stipend is contingent on funding).

### 3. May I use my VMSDEP benefits after I reach age 30?

The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services may certify dependents above the age of 29 in those cases in which extenuating circumstances prevented the dependent child from using the benefits before the age of 30.

**4. Can a Veteran’s or military service member’s stepchild or adopted child take advantage of VMSDEP benefits?**

The biological and adopted child of a qualified military service member may take advantage of VMSDEP benefits. Eligibility does not include the stepchild.

**5. As an eligible child, if I get married while attending school, do I lose my eligibility for VMSDEP benefits?**

No, an eligible child's marital status does not affect such child's eligibility for VMSDEP benefits.

**6. What should I do to apply for VMSDEP benefits?**

Complete the VMSDEP online application found at <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov>.

**7. How long does the application process take?**

In order to determine eligibility prior to your semester start date, a complete VMSDEP application should be submitted at least 90 calendar days prior to the date tuition and mandatory fees are due to the school:

Semester You Plan to Start Your Benefits	Submit Application By
Fall	May 1 <sup>st</sup>
Spring	September 1 <sup>st</sup>
Summer	December 15 <sup>th</sup>

**8. Do I need to reapply every year of enrollment?**

No, you do not have to reapply.

**NOTE:** If you plan to transfer to another school or require a change in enrollment, please visit our website at <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov> to obtain a *Transfer Request Form* or *Summer\_Winter Semester Request Form*, whichever is applicable.

**9. How does the tuition and mandatory fees waiver work?**

Eligible students are entitled to 8 semesters of program benefits. This also applies if you attend one school for part of your eligibility period and another school for the remainder. Please note that semesters, not academic credit earned, is the standard measure to determine benefit usage.

**10. Are students who are eligible for VMSDEP benefits entitled to receive a stipend for school attendance?**

**Tier 1** students are not eligible for a stipend.

**Tier 2** student are eligible to receive a stipend. For detailed information regarding VMSDEP stipend funding please visit: <https://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/tuition-aid-section/undergrad-grad-financial-aid/vmsdepfactsheetsept2019.pdf>.

**NOTE:** The stipend is not available for the advance purchase of books. Stipend funding is typically disbursed to your school after your school's add/drop period.

**11. Does entitlement to VMSDEP benefits guarantee admission to a Virginia public college or university?**

No, eligibility for the VMSDEP benefit does not guarantee admission. All student must meet each individual college or university's admission requirements.

**12. May I attend more than one Virginia public colleges or universities at the same time?**

Yes, eligible students are permitted to use VMSDEP benefits at multiple Virginia public colleges and universities during any given semester.

**13. May I take online courses?**

Yes, as long as those classes are offered by a Virginia public college or university.

**14. May I use my VMSDEP benefits for remedial or refresher courses?**

Yes, as long as those classes are offered by a Virginia public college or university.

**15. May I use VMSDEP benefits for non-credit courses?**

Yes, as long as those classes are offered by a Virginia public college or university.

Non-credit courses are **not eligible for stipend**. (Please see SCHEV's Tier 2 fact sheet <https://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/tuition-aid-section/undergrad-grad-financial-aid/vmsdepfactsheetsept2019.pdf>)

**16. May I use VMSDEP benefits for study-abroad courses?**

Yes, if a study abroad program is owned by a public institution, then the respective institution is required to waive the tuition and mandatory fees; however, if the program is a contract, or third-party program offered through, but independent of, a public institution, the tuition and fees charges cannot be waived because VMSDEP benefits are not applicable at institutions other than a public institution.

**17. May I use my VMSDEP benefits to earn a masters or professional degree?**

Yes, VMSDEP benefits may be used for any program offered at any Virginia public or university.

**NOTE:** The benefits are available for 8 semesters. This includes graduate studies, law school, etc.

**18. May I use my VMSDEP benefits to attend a private school or a school in another state?**

No, VMSDEP benefits are only applicable at a Virginia public colleges and universities.

If you choose to attend a private school, you may be entitled to receive federal education benefits offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Visit the VA's website at <https://www.va.gov/> to obtain additional information.

**19. What happens if I drop out of school or have a temporary interruption in training?**

If training is interrupted, you will need to have a recalculation of your benefits completed before you return to school. Please visit our website at <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov>, select the *Education and Employment* tab, select the *VMSDEP* link, and complete and submit the *Recalculation Request Form* under the Forms section.

**20. If I withdraw from school, will it affect my entitlement period under VMSDEP?**

Please see your school's financial aid department or bursar's office to determine if VMSDEP benefits applied to the term or terms in question.

**21. Are there any attendance or academic requirements that I must meet to continue my eligibility under VMSDEP?**

Your attendance and academic progress must be acceptable according to the guidelines established by the school(s) you attend.

**22. If I do not successfully compete one of my courses, may I repeat it under VMSDEP?**

VMSDEP benefits apply toward any courses taken by an eligible student within any given semester. The benefits are calculated on a semester basis regardless of the how many courses taken within a semester.

**NOTE:** Taking one course within a semester will result in using one semester of VMSDEP benefits; and similarly, taking multiple courses within a semester will result in using one semester of VMSDEP benefits.

**23. How is VMSDEP different from the VA's Dependents Education Assistance (DEA/Chapter 35) Program?**

VMSDEP is provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia and is administered by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. The DEA program is a program offered by VA and falls under the G.I. Bill benefits umbrella. Eligibility for one program is not automatically equate to eligibility for the other.

**24. Can I use my VMSDEP benefits in conjunction with my DEA (Chapter 35) benefits?**

Yes, eligible students are permitted to use VMSDEP and DEA benefits concurrently.

**NOTE:** Eligibility periods for the programs vary; therefore, students should consider their individual circumstances to determine whether to use the benefits simultaneously or separately.

**25. If approved for VMSDEP benefits, can I be reimbursed for education expenses paid for out-of-pocket?**

Eligibility for the VMSDEP benefit is based upon the date that an application was **submitted**. It is at the discretion of the college or university whether any tuition and fees applied to the student's account prior to the VMSDEP benefit authorization date. Please note that colleges and universities are not obligated to refund any monies that have already been paid.

**26. What should I do if I have additional questions?**

Please contact the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

Mail: Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program  
101 North 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 17th Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219  
Phone: (804) 225-2083  
Fax: (807) 786 – 0809  
Email: VMSDEP@dvs.virginia.gov